

Remarks

Claims 1-31 are pending in this application. Each of claims 1-31 have been rejected as being obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over the combination of U.S. Patent No. 6,438,594 to Bowman-Amuah and U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 20030204597 to Arakawa et al. ("the Arakawa Publication").

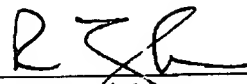
A. The Arakawa Publication is Not Prior Art

Because the Arakawa Publication is not prior art to the present application, the Arakawa Publication cannot serve as a basis for the rejection of the claims of the pending patent application. The present application was filed on August 21, 2001. The application resulting in the Arakawa Publication was not filed in this country until January 30, 2003. The Arakawa Publication was not published until October 30, 2003. Moreover, the application resulting in the Arakawa Publication claims priority from a Japanese patent application that was filed in Japan on April 26, 2002. Thus, the filing date of the present application is before all of the filing dates and publication dates associated with the Arakawa Publication. The rejection of the pending claims on the basis of the combination of Bowman-Amuah and the Arakawa Publication should be withdrawn and these claims should be passed to issuance.

Conclusion

Applicants respectfully submit that pending claims 1-31 of the present invention are allowable. Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of the pending claims be withdrawn and that these claims be passed to issuance.

Respectfully submitted,



Roger Fulghum
Registration No. 39,678

Baker Botts L.L.P.
910 Louisiana
One Shell Plaza
Houston, Texas 77002-4995
(713) 229-1707

Baker Botts Docket Number: 016295.0673

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